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● (1300)

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Naaman Sugrue): Honourable members of the subcommittee, I see a quorum.

I must inform members that the clerk of the subcommittee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, cannot entertain points of order, nor participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. Pursuant to a motion adopted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on February 4, 2016, the chair of the subcommittee must be a member of the government party.

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Ms. Khalid.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): I move to have Anita Vandenbeld as our new chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Ms. Khalid that Anita Vandenbeld be elected as chair of the subcommittee.

Are there further motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Anita Vandenbeld duly elected chair of the subcommittee. I invite Anita Vandenbeld to take the chair.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair (Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.)): Thank you very much, everybody. It's a tremendous honour to be elected chair of this committee. I know it's a committee that works very well along cross-partisan lines and deals with some of the most important issues facing the world today. Thank you very much for placing your confidence in me.

I'd also like to thank our outgoing chair, Michael Levitt, for the work that he has done chairing this committee.

I do believe that at this point it would probably be best for me to be briefed by the clerk and have some conversations before we start with any business. What I would suggest is that the meeting on Tuesday could deal with what subject areas we want to pursue. My understanding, without having been briefed by the clerk, is that most of the studies the committee has done are final or near final, so this would be a good opportunity for the committee to come together and decide what we want to study next.

I would suggest, if you have topics or ideas, to be prepared on Tuesday to bring those ideas.

Is that an indication of—

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): I'd like to speak, Chair, whenever you have finished.

The Chair: Okay.

We could have that discussion on Tuesday. If any of you want to be in touch with me throughout the weekend, please feel free to P9 me, and we can have those conversations as well.

Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Chair, welcome to the chair. We appreciate your willingness to sit as a chair, and I'm certain that we'll have a good opportunity to deal with some very serious issues. Unfortunately we live in a world where there is no shortage of human rights violations, and so one of the biggest challenges is just choosing what we do.

I have spoken to a person from the Uighur community. If my intel is correct, my understanding is that they've spoken to every individual on this committee, and there's unanimous feeling that we should pursue a follow-up meeting and have some testimony. I'm only going by their word to me that they've spoken to everyone in the committee, but I'm wondering, if that is the case, if we could try to cobble together those witnesses for Tuesday, and maybe leave Thursday for the business. The Uighur persecution is getting more severe, and it's of catastrophic proportions already. I'll leave it to you if you want to address the rest of the committee in that regard.

The Chair: Mr. Tabbara.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): I agree with Mr. Sweet. This was also brought up by our Prime Minister at the United Nations a couple of days ago. As you mentioned, Mr. Sweet, I spoke with the individual about three days ago. I think it's a situation we want to discuss now, given the importance of it.

Secondly, maybe on a Tuesday we can get from the analysts or the clerk a time frame from now until the House rises in December, just to see how much time we have left so that we can map out what we want to do, the next topics that we want to—

● (1305)

The Chair: I'd like to remind the committee that if we're going to discuss what studies and what kinds of witnesses we'd like to proceed with, these sorts of matters are usually done in camera. We are actually still in public right now, although I'm keen to see if there's a consensus of the committee in terms of how to proceed on Tuesday.

Ms. Khalid.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's really great to see you sitting there. I know you bring extensive knowledge and expertise to our subcommittee and we're very excited to have you.

Mr. Sweet brought up the Uighur issue earlier this year as well, and I'm wholeheartedly supportive. I do think this is an urgent matter and we should address it on Tuesday, at the very least getting the local witnesses in, and then going from there.

I do want to seek clarification on how many weeks of testimony we want to hear on this.

The Chair: It sounds as though there's consensus by the committee to proceed on Tuesday with some of the witnesses, presuming, of course, the clerk is able to get witnesses who are available on Tuesday. I would suggest that on Thursday we have a committee business meeting. Then we can have this discussion in a more fulsome way.

Is there agreement by the committee?

Mr. Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): I would like to ask a question about that. Are we having just the one hearing on Uighurs, or is that the beginning? I would like to be in camera to have the discussion, but I think there are bigger issues around what's happening there that I would like to talk to the committee about.

The Chair: Yes. I would suggest that would be something we would want to discuss on Thursday and talk about the extent of this particular study.

My understanding is that there are witnesses who are probably prepared to come on short notice, so we can start with some of those witnesses. Then I think on Thursday we would have the committee discuss in more detail how we want to proceed for the rest of this session.

Seeing consensus, I don't think there's any other business to raise today.

Thank you very much, everybody. It's a real honour.

The committee meeting is adjourned.

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